# SERMON

Preached at

# Beccles in Suffolk

BEFORE THE

Right Reverend Father in GOD,

# JOHN,

Lord Biſhop of *NORWICH*,

At the Second Seſſion of his Lordſhip's Primary Viſitation held there, *May* 27. 1692.

By *Francis Hutchinſon*, M. A. Vicar of *Hoxne*.

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TO THE

Right Reverend Father in God,

# JOHN,

Lord Biſhop of *NORWICH.*

MY LORD,

I *Shall not ſeek Matter to ſwell this Dedication, becauſe the only Reaſon of it is, That when any ſhall wonder to ſee this Sermon in Print, they may underſtand, that it was not my own Opinion of the Performance, but your* LORDSHIP'S *Commands that drew it abroad; and having thoſe for my ſafe Conduct, I am not afraid to venture it without farther Apology. But tho this,* MY LORD, *be the buſineſs of the Epiſtle,*

*stle, yet I cannot conclude it, without taking the opportunity to acknowledge the very great sense I have of your Lordship's extraordinary Candor and Goodness, in your Lordship's Encouragement of my honest meaning; and as it was that, I doubt not, which drew from your Lordship so favonrable an opinion; so in that, I hope, your Lordship shall never have reason to think your self deceived.*

I am,

MY LORD,

Your Lordship's

Most Dutiful

and Obedient Servant,

FRAN. HUTCHINSON.

*Hoxne*, July 1. 1692.

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# SERMON

Preached at the

## Primary Viſitation, &c.

2 COR. V. 19.

*To wit, That God was in Chriſt, reconciling the world unto himſelf, not imputing their treſpaſſes unto them, and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.*

THE Connexion of theſe Words with the Verſe before, according to the ſtrictneſſes of ſtile, is not obvious, becauſe they ſeem to ſpeak both of them almoſt the ſame thing. The Verſe before runs thus; *And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himſelf by Jeſus Chriſt, and hath given unto us the Miniſtry of Reconciliation:*

*tion*: *To wit*, (it follows), *That God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.* The Particle in the *Greek* that joins them is Ὡς. Ὡς, ὅτι Θεὸς ἦν ἐν Κριστῷ κόσμον καταλλάσσων ἑαυτῷ, &c. Our Translators, to make the latter Verse an Explication of the former, render it, *To wit.* Dr. *Hammond* Paraphrases it, *The Tenor of our Commission runs thus.* Others will make it signifie, *Because.* Others, *So.* Others, *Truly*; each of them according as they think they can best make out something of a thread or connexion in the Discourse. And possibly, without connecting it according to rules, the Apostle might only design, with a little variation, to speak over again, a point that he would have them take notice of. For though St. *Paul* was a great Master of Words, and when he saw cause, was not out-done by *Tertullus*, yet he could well sink his Stile. And when he had to do with mean capacities, without excellency of speech, and without wisdom of words, he chose to speak with a natural and great simplicity; and perhaps in the case before us, we need look for no other figure or rule of speech, besides that very plain one of speaking a good thing twice, that they might understand and remember it the better.

Without labouring therefore about the Connexion, I shall proceed to the Words, which of themselves contain a very full sense.

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It begins, *God was in Chriſt reconciling*; i. e. God tried by Chriſt to reconcile. He was pleaſed to contrive, to make uſe of that expedient of ſending our Saviour, that he might through him *reconcile the world to himſelf*; i. e. That he might remove, put an end to that unhappy difference, that diſtance which of neceſſity there muſt be betwixt a Juſt God, and an unjuſt world. They had ſtood to one another in the proper relation of Creator and Creatures; of a Creator that loved and delighted in his Works; and of Creatures that were dutiful, and pleaſed him in all things. It was ſin, and diſobedience, and unworthineſs on man's part, that had ſeparated betwixt them. He would try, through our Saviour, to bring them back to Righteouſneſs, to Wiſdom, to their duty, to the proper place of Creatures, that he might again be to them a beneficent, a good, provident Creator. It follows, *Not imputing their Treſpaſſes unto them*; *i. e.* This great reconciliation was to be made, not by the uſual way, by mens making reſtitution for their Injury; but by God's forgiving it. It was to be brought about, not by the way of punctual Juſtice, and ſtrict Right, but by another Covenant, which in our Saviour ſhould be granted to men: by a way of Mercy, and Connivance, and pardon for great Faults before Repentance, and great Infirmities after. *And hath committed* (it follows) *unto us the word of Reconciliation.* Unto us Apoſtles, as St. *Paul* wrote it then; unto us Miniſters, as we muſt read it now. For this Work of reconciling the

World to God, was not the buſineſs of one Life, of one Age; but as all Generations, and all Men, being Apoſtate, wanted to be brought back to their duty; ſo there muſt be a means commenſurate to all men, and to every Generation: He committed therefore, or depoſited the Truſt, the Charge of this great Work, in the hands of the Miniſtry, who as Ambaſſadours from him, as Workers together with him, ſhould, in ſucceſſion, endeavour to reconcile their own Ages and Flocks.

In farther ſpeaking to theſe words, I ſhall diſcourſe to you,

*Firſt*, Concerning this reconciling men to God, as it is our Saviour's Work.

*Secondly*, As it is Miniſters, to whom, as Workers togethers with him, he hath committed it. Which with ſome Obſervations concerning the Reconciliation it ſelf, and why ſuch a great Work might be committed by a wiſe God to mens hands; and what good Uſes and Obligations ariſes from it, both to Miniſters and People, ſhall be the remaining part of my Diſcourſe. And rather than ſome other Subjects nearer to the Occaſion, I have choſen theſe general Meditations concerning our high Calling, as being a Stone, which, I hope, with leaſt reflection, may be caſt by any hand. And without farther Apology, I proceed to the Particulars.

*Firſt*,

*Firſt*, For the reconciling God and Man, as it is our Saviour's Work. And though the words of the Text mention only his reconciling the World to God, not God to the World; yet, to prevent miſunderſtanding, I will conſider it both ways, though I do it more briefly.

*Firſt*, Our Saviour, by his death, reconciled God to the World, and made atonement for us. Upon the Altar of his Croſs, being a Prieſt to God, he offered up himſelf a coſtly Sacrifice for quick and dead; and the Virtue, the Obedience, the Merit of his Sufferings, like Incenſe, aſcended up to Heaven, and made peace with God for a ſinful World.

When indeed the Scripture ſpeaks of this, it does not give us Definitions, and diſtinguiſh with a Scholaſtick niceneſs: It is another, a far different Spirit, that actuates thoſe holy Books. It ſhews little ſolicitude about the Diſputer to anſwer his Queſtions; but its care is for the heavy-laden Sinner, to ſatisfy his Conſcience. The fears of the broken-hearted, the miſgiving, and trouble of their minds, the ſuſpicions that their guilt purſues them with; all its concern is to give ſolid comfort, and quiet to theſe: And to theſe it gives ſatisfaction, That God's Boſome is now open; there hath been a Ranſome found, a Sacrifice in our ſtead; that God's Anger is appeaſed, his Juſtice ſatisfied; and that, through our Saviour's Blood, there is pardon to the uttermoſt, and forgiveneſs to every penitent man. For the Ends of

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the Goſpel, and the encouragement to Repentance and amendment, and for the ſatisfaction and quiet of guilty Conſciences, theſe general and plain Expreſſions are ſufficient; and about theſe we muſt exerciſe our Underſtanding with humility and reverence, without curiouſly enquiring into them. For when it is ſaid, that God is pacified, appeaſed, atoned, we may believe, That in ſuch Expreſſions, there is ſomething of condeſcenſion; and we muſt underſtand them with a remembrance, *That in God there is no variableneſs, neither ſhadow of turning.* God was always merciful, and ready to ſhew compaſſion to a compaſſionable Caſe: As he recommends to us forgiving of Injuries as an Excellence and Vertue; ſo he was never averſe to it himſelf, when forgiving would be for a good end: But then, on the other hand, He muſt be truly, and without a Metaphor, diſpleaſed; and as far as any thing ſo like a Paſſion can be in the Divine Nature, muſt be offended, muſt diſlike that ſuch Ingratitude and Perverſeneſs ſhould be in his Creature that he made upright. And to let his Threatning fall, and his ſolemn known Law be tranſgreſſed, and his Authority deſpiſed, without manifeſting his diſpleaſure, would be a dangerous Example, hurtful to Government, and encourage wicked Actions in his Dominion. Upon the whole therefore, purpoſely avoiding to determine too particularly, we may uſually ſatisfy our ſelves to believe, That God ſaw it wiſe, to ſet a mark upon Sin before he forgave it. He would forgive, but in ſuch a manner, that men ſhould ſee, that he diſliked, though

though he pardoned: And that it would be ill continuing in such a wretched Revolt; for, if upon mens repentance, he would not save them without Blood; if they continue to provoke him, they must perish everlastingly.

But this part of the Reconciliation is not that in which he is pleased to join Fellow-workers with him. In this *he trod the Wine-press alone; and of the people there were none with him. By that one Oblation of himself, he perfected for ever them that are sanctified*; And all that is left for us, is, to act a great Faith, and full assurance, that if we repent, and believe, for his sake, we shall be saved.

*Secondly*, But as our Saviour came to reconcile God to the World; So *2dly*, to reconcile the World to God: *i. e.* to persuade, to recover the World back to their obedience and duty. To preach them out of their Apostacy, out of their wickedness; and reduce, and bring them back to the state of Just Men, and dutiful Creatures, that God might be to them a Beneficent Creator.

His reconciling the World, is a raising the world to such degrees of Excellency, Vertue and Goodness, that they may be, in some sort, meet, worthy, at least comparatively with wicked men, worthy, worthier than they, to be glorified and saved.

It is a bringing them to such repentance and amendment, that the receiving of them may encourage Justice and Obedience in his world. For, for God

God to be reconciled to bad men, if it was a thing that could be, yet would but encourage unreaſonable men, and bad actions under his Government: The favouring righteous men, encourages Goodneſs; pardoning penitent men, encourages Repentance; but receiving or pardoning, much more defending and maintaining impenitent, prophane men, would encourage them to be wicked ſtill; and that was far enough from our Saviour's deſire or purpoſe.

Our Saviour's reconciling the world therefore, is a bringing them to ſuch degrees of Repentance, and Humility, and Duty, and Goodneſs, that it may be honourable for God to make them his Favourites, and that his Bleſſings upon them may be Motives and Encouragements to Goodneſs, not to Impenitence and evil Actions.

And this is his long work, that ſtretches it ſelf through all Generations, and through all mens lives. The carrying of it on was the reaſon why he contrived his Followers into ſuch a Religious Combination, ſuch a holy Society, as we behold his Church. For the promoting this, he left us his Goſpel, that Noble Syſtem of Divine Truth, and Wiſdom from above; that inſpired Philoſophy of our Nature, with reſpect to God, which ſhould be the ſeed of Everlaſting Life; the Plaſtick Virtue forming and faſhioning our Souls to the Image of our Maker, and all ſorts of excellency, and praiſe-worthy Qualities. For the ſame end he gave us Sacraments, *i. e.* Covenants and Obligations, to be as bonds

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and ties upon our slippery natures, to preserve them true to their Religious Vows. And for the advancing this same work, he appointed in his Church a Ministry, living Agents and Labourers, to apply these things to the salvation of men: Which leads me to the Second General Head of my Discourse; which is,

2*dly*. The Reconciling of the world, as it is in Ministers hands. And this is easily shewed, now we have seen what it is in our Saviour's. For it is an endeavouring, in subordination to our Great Master, and in the use of his means, to make the World good, our Parishes religious, and to bring all particular persons committed to our Charge, to such a life as God prescribes in his Word; that whatever benefits and good, those men have, whom God favours, above those that he hates, our own people may be partakers of them.

It is a labouring to present our Flocks, *a people prepared, and ready for the Lord*; as the Scripture speaks. To cure in them that Wickedness and Evil, which must be discouraged and condemned, not only by God, but Angels, and Wise-men, and all that judge right; and to bring them into the number of those excellent of the earth, that God declares he loves, and approves, and will reward for ever.

And now, according as mens Faith and Tempers are, such are their secret thoughts and Reflections upon this Discourse. Some think this whole Doctrine of our Reconciling men to God,

to be only Imagination in the People, and in the Miniſter Art to magnifie his own Calling. Some think, if there be really ſuch a thing, it is however a Work too great, a Truſt too weighty to be left in mens hands. And others, it is to be hoped, do really believe, and are ſatisfied of the wiſdom of the thing, becauſe God choſe it, and therefore ſtrengthen their hands, and encourage, and pray for them in ſo great a work. And to conſider, briefly, theſe ſeveral Caſes:

1. Atheiſtical Profane men make a mock and jeer at ſuch Diſcourſes. They believe the whole matter to be the work of Craft, and ſtrong Imaginations. When mens faults and ſins are called Apoſtacy, and Rebellion, and fighting againſt God; they think it a needleſs, a ſevere ſtraining and aggravating of things beyond what the Actors intend them; and when we ſpeak of God's Anger, and Wrath, and Diſpleaſure, they think, *Ira Dei nihil eſt*; and that in the Divine Nature there are no ſuch reſentments. This War with Heaven they believe little more than the fabulous War of the Gyants with the Gods; and that in humane Actions there is no ſuch Malignity, nor in the Divine Nature ſuch Diſpleaſure.

And in this caſe, if there was need, we might give for anſwer, the neceſſity of uſing popular terms in diſcourſes that are accommodated to the meaneſt of the people. For tho Divinity be in truth, the Philoſophy of God and man,

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of Creator and Creatures, and of Creatures under the ſeveral qualifications of dutiful or rebellious; and of rebellious, how their caſe is if they continue in their revolt; how, if they return; for of neceſſity there muſt be a ſad difference; tho, I ſay, Divinity be the ſtrict Philoſophy, and punctual truth of theſe things, yet if in teaching this higheſt Philoſophy to the loweſt men, the Scripture ſpeaks to them in their own Language, and the Phraſes of common ſpeech, we may juſtly demand an allowance to the neceſſity; but in the point in hand we want no ſuch favour; for it is a manifeſt caſe, that God made us; he put us into his world, and feeds and maintains us; it is his Bread we eat, his Air we breathe, his World we live in; it is as evident, that it is his Command and Will, that we ſhould govern our Lives by the Rules of Juſtice and Truth, and with conſtant Honour and Remembrance of him. He has written this in our very Natures, engraven it upon our Conſciences, contrived it into our Conſtitution, urged it in the whole Courſe of his Providence, and openly required it under Penalty of his Wrath, by his Prophets and Meſſengers: And therefore for men, with Preſumption and Contempt of theſe Manifeſtations of his Will, to live counter to all this, without any allowance, in a ſtrict ſenſe, is Enmity, and Oppoſition, and War with Heaven. If contradicting his Will, and doing deſpite to his Being, be a fighting againſt him, then our Oaths, and Blaſphemies, and Oppreſſions of one another, and all forbidden actions, are

as much fighting againſt God, as if we caſt darts againſt the Clouds. And for God's Anger, and Diſlike, and Diſpleaſure, what Arguments would men have, but the Evils and Miſeries, and Puniſhments of the World? Why have we Plagues and Infections, Storms, and Tempeſts, Dearth and Famine? Why have we Deaths, and Diſeaſes, and Pains? Were theſe in God's World, when he made it firſt? From the beginning, was it ſo? Are they the diſpenſations of a pleaſed Being? Or are they not the Arrows of the Almighty, which ſhows his diſlike and hatred of our ways?

Whatſoever therefore becomes of the Reconciliation, the difference is viſible. The War and Enmity, and of our ſide, the evil ſtate that follows it, is matter of Fact; and *Heathens*, that knew not the Cauſe, acknowledged the Effect. Tho they knew not *Adam*, and the Forbidden Fruit, yet ſome way or other they ſaw and confeſſed, That Human Souls were fallen, were in an evil, unnatural, afflicted ſtate: And though there are reckoned up ſome Hundred Sects and Philoſophies, yet ſome of their own Authors have confeſſed, That none of them ſhewed us any certain way of delivering the Soul from its evils, and raiſing it to a good, to its proper ſtate. The *Platonick* Method, which, to our times, hath kept in beſt reputation, its immaterial abſtractions from the Body, its ſolutions of the Mind, ſeem to have little more at bottom than a good habit of thinking. Inſtead of being an univerſal remedy to the whole maſs of Mankind, it only reached ſome wealthy

wealthy men of parts, and leasure; and those few it reached, it concerned little the Salvation of their Souls, but only some Mysteries in Numbers, and Astronomy, or Vainer Idea's. But not to digress from the Point.

All the Calamities upon our Nature, and the evil State of Human Souls, which in confused Notions Heathens do confess, in Christian Terms, it was this Apostacy of man from his God, together with the punishment that God laid upon him for his unjust Revolt. Instead of recovering, men plunged themselves deeper into the Curse; and from disobeying, and breach of his Laws, they went farther from him; till, in length of time, they forgot both him, and his Creation. Idolatry, and Fables, and Violence, with them, overspread the World; for with the knowledge of the True God, the equal Father of Mankind and Judge, all the true and solid grounds of Faith and Right were lost and gone. *Astræa* fled to Heaven, as Idolatry prevail'd on Earth. And not this only; but as they forgat God, they lost sight of their Supream Good, what it was that must make Human Nature happy, if they should ever obtain it. All their Disputes about the *Summum bonum* were fruitless, and vain; for when the Creator himself was become the Unknown God, their Reason could not lead them into this Truth, That a Creatures Happiness must consist in the Favour and Enjoyment of its Creator, and what Blessings it shall be his good pleasure to provide for it.

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The knowledge of this, How far we were gone from him, by what way we could return, was the Secret hid from Ages and Generations; but was made manifeſt by our Saviour, with all appendant parts of knowledge needful to that great Change. He ſhewed us the depth, the very bottom of the Fall, and the height to which we might riſe again. He deſcribes and repreſents the Soul in its various Paſſions through that myſterious Courſe; its firſt Convictions, Sorrows, Convulſions at the entrance; its After-joys, and Fears, Suſpicions, Relapſes, Recoveries, Temptations, Infirmities, with all its Comforts and Supports that bears it thorough all thoſe Tryals. Prophane men (it is true) deride theſe things, as the Dreams of Preachers, and Hypochondriacal men; but profeſſing to be Wiſe men, become Fools: For how can the mind of man ſuffer ſuch a mighty change of all old things into new? for when, of Ignorant, Debauch'd, and Godleſs, a man becomes Wiſe, and Virtuous, Religious, and fearing God, there is little left in him that hath not ſuffered an alteration; and which way, by what Philoſophy, can a Soul paſs betwixt ſuch diſtant Points, but through the middle States and Paſſions? Leaving therefore their Follies, we may admire our Saviour's deeper Inſight, and thorough Knowledge of all in man. His deſcription of this Change, together with Grace, and Supports, and Motives to carry men through it to a ſtate of Grace, and Virtue, was the Deliverance, the Salvation of Human Souls, which wiſer Heathens confeſſed wanting. And though

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the diſcovery of theſe things was above man's Reaſon; yet, when diſcovered, they carry their own evidence; and the more carefully we conſider, the more ſhall we confeſs, that this muſt be the reconciliation of our Souls to God; that there is, and can be no other recovery, either to Excellency or Happineſs.

2*dly*, Some that grant, and ſee the neceſſity of this Reconciliation, think it is a Truſt too great to be left in mens hands. The Eternal State of ſo many Immortal Spirits, the recovery of mens Souls to Wiſdom, and Juſtice, and their duty to God; and the conſequence of the doing or omitting this, being Heaven, or Hell; an Everlaſting good Life, or never ending Puniſhments; the care of ſuch a Work ſeems ſtrange to be left to any Order of men that of neceſſity ſhould ſometimes neglect, ſometimes miſlead, and too often be wanting in ſuch a mighty Charge.

And our chief Anſwer in this Caſe is, So God appointed it, and we muſt reſt ſatisfied in his Wiſdom. He foreſaw all the Defects, Neglects, Errors, Offences, and what degrees of benefit only could be expected; and notwithſtanding, ſuch an Order he choſe, and appointed this work of Reconciliation for their Office. And although it becomes not us to give the Reaſons of God's Diſpenſations; yet theſe two things, with humility, we may take notice concerning it.

1*ſt*, Is what St. *Paul* teaches us, 2 *Cor.* 4. 7. *We have this Treaſure in earthen Veſſels, that the excellency*

*excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.* God would not put the Work ſo out of his own hand to the Preachers Abilities, that, in Heaven, they ſhould give the thanks for their Eternal Bleſſedneſs to their Converters, as if the deciding-Point had turned upon their Miniſtry. He would ſtill have the bringing men to ſuch a mighty Happineſs, be his own benefit and Gift, and therefore choſe ſuch to be Workers together with him; that where they were beſt, the thanks might notwithſtanding be his: And where they are moſt defective, we may believe that either by Providences, or ſecret Grace, or elſe by allowances in Judgment, he will take care that the Flock ſhall be no Sufferers. They may be indeed amongſt thoſe to whom leſs was given, but of that they muſt not complain; for God is Debtor to no man; but ſome way or other we may aſſuredly believe, that God will make up to them what is wanting in outward means; that they ſhall have no juſt Complaint, but that they had ſufficient for their Salvation, if they had improved it.

2*dly*, This method of propoſing his Goſpel and Will by the Miniſtry of men, rather than by Angels, or any other way that carried more Majeſty, ſeems fitteſt to advance the praiſe and virtue of our Faith and Obedience. It ſeems not a defect, but a deeper Wiſdom, and Deſign, on purpoſe that there might be the more excellency and praiſe in our Religion and Virtue.

For

For of all the Actions of our lives, we are then moſt ſeen; we ſhow either moſt virtue, or moſt guilt; we are the fitteſt Subjects of Puniſhment, if we do evil; and of Reward, if we do well; when we act with greateſt freedom, according as our Hearts and Tempers are. When without any terrour upon us, or any unuſual awe, we may conſider both God, and our Duty, and our own love to it, or averſion: when every Faculty may act its part, and every Paſſion make its plea, and the evil half of our Nature try its ſtrength: When at ſuch a time, our judgment, and love of Virtue, and ſenſe of God, carry us to our Duty, then Religion is the Heart, the Man, and ſhews that there is ſomething of a juſt and grateful Principle within, and a love of God, and goodneſs: But now when we do well, or promiſe fair under a Terrour, and becauſe of Circumſtances, we may be but like a Bowl that is turned, and forced againſt its Byas; and many times men have been overborn by external foreign Motives, into Religious Fits; when at the ſame time, they have been the worſt of men. Their Devotion was like a preternatural heat in their Bodies; while the Occaſion remained, their Zeal continued; but as that went off, their Devotion went with it. While they were in their Religious Fit, their Natures were under reſtraint, were not themſelves; and as they came to themſelves, they return to their Sins.

When God himſelf was pleaſed to ſpeak from *Sinai* with Thunder and Lightning, Flames and Smoak, to the midſt of Heaven, they all promiſed, even the mixt Multitude, that they would obey whatſoever he ſhould command them: *But oh*, ſays God, *that there was ſuch a heart in them*; Their promiſe was not the Heart, but their Fright; and as ſoon as he ceaſed, at their own deſire, to ſpeak himſelf, and ſent his Meſſages again, as he had ſent them by *Moſes* before, they were the ſame ſtiff-necked People they had always been.

This, with humility, we may believe might be one Reaſon, why in the time of our Probation, and trial of our Virtue and Obedience, in treating with us, God would lay aſide his Majeſty, and ſpeak to us by one another. For otherwiſe it is alike; It is as eaſie to him to cloathe his Word with terrour, and make his Ambaſſadours ſuch as men durſt not refuſe. He could ſend us Meſſengers from the dead, that ſhould terrify us into obedience. As there are inviſible Beings, Angels in our Aſſemblies preſent at our Worſhip, he could make them our Teachers; and with joy and gladneſs they would obey his Word: He could make every Miniſter a *Moſes*, and every Hill a *Sinai*. As in the 14th of the *Revelations* there is repreſented an Angel flying through the midſt of Heaven with the Everlaſting

laſting Goſpel, to preach unto them that dwell on Earth; he could make it literally true, and repeat it often, in every Age, in all mens ſight: But in theſe Caſes, that ſort of Obedience which they ſhould happen to produce, would be a great Fear, rather than a Human deliberate Action. It would have much of the Fright, and but little of the Man, of the Mind, the Choice, or the Principle within: And that our Service might be a Free-will-offering, a deliberate, reaſonable, voluntary Oblation; therefore he would have his Ambaſſadours be men, that though they ſuſtained the Perſon of the Almighty, yet they might ſay as *Elihu*, Job 33. 6, 7. *Behold, I am according to thy wiſh in God's ſtead; I alſo am formed out of the Clay; Behold my terrour ſhall not make thee afraid, neither ſhall my hand be heavy upon thee.* But this for the ſecond ſort of Hearers.

3*dly*, The third are thoſe that do believe there is ſuch a Work as reconciling men to God, and believe Miniſters are appointed to it by a wiſe God, that does all things well; and to theſe, both Miniſters and People, I ſhall addreſs the remaining part of my Diſcourſe.

1*ſt*, For thoſe that ſuſtain this great Character of Ambaſſadours from God to reconcile men to himſelf. And to theſe, It would not be proper, ſcarce pardonable in me to be much

in Exhortation: but on this Point, I would hope it is no neceſſary work. For if ever things ſpeak themſelves, they ſpeak in the Caſe before us; and, without a Monitor, call upon us to take heed to the Miniſtry that we have received, that we fulfil it. The weight of the matter, the everlaſting ſtate of our People, what, and where we ſhall be through a long Eternity; the Account that we our ſelves muſt give of ſuch a ſacred Truſt; the vaſt importance of theſe things requires in us a ſeriouſneſs, a diligence, a care, nearer and tenderer than can be compelled by Canons, or forced by Laws. We ſhould endeavour to diſcharge every Office with ſomething of a zeal, and fervour of mind, with a degree of that Divine Spirit that was in our Saviour himſelf: Such a mind as moved him to begin this Work of reconciling and reforming the World, ſhould actuate and inſpirit us in carrying it on. In his breaſt was a great love to Mankind, a mighty ſenſe of the value of theſe Immortal Spirits within us, a great compaſſion to ſee them flying from their good, and pulling upon themſelves miſery, without knowing what they did; a generous, a charitable deſire to bring them back, (though at firſt againſt their wills) to Wiſdom, and Juſtice, to their Duty, and their Happineſs. A meaſure in ſome degree of the ſame Spirit ſhould be in us; and where it is wanting, we are defective in the beſt qualification for our work.—— When the Seventy were to be choſen Fellow-workers to *Moſes*, for the

ſame

ſame work, they were to have of the ſame Spirit: And accordingly it is ſaid, *Numbers* 11. 25. *And the Lord came down in a cloud, and ſpake unto him, and took of the Spirit that was upon him, and gave it unto the Seventy Elders.* And if we be Labourers in this Miniſtry of reconciling men to God, without ſomething of the ſame mind that was in Jeſus, we ſhall be indeed Ambaſſadors, but no Friends to the Work. To qualify our ſelves therefore for this High Calling, there is not only requiſite Learning, and Knowledge, Interpretation of Tongues, Skill in the deep Myſteries of our Religion, underſtanding of the Nature and Conſtitution of Chriſt's Church, with the Bounds and Rights of the ſeveral Orders; All theſe together make but a dry ſort of Divinity, unleſs there be with them a Chriſtian Zeal to make uſe of them for the promoting ſolid Goodneſs and Piety in the World, and the ſaving mens Souls.

No matter for the Jeſts and Scoffs of Prophane men; no matter for the Jeers of an Atheiſtical Age: Such Temptations are the proof and trial of our Sincerity; and with reſpect to them all, we muſt remember him who ſaid, *Whoſoever ſhall be aſhamed of me, and of my words, in this evil and adulterous generation, of him alſo ſhall the Son of man be aſhamed, when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy Angels.*

The

The laſt part of my Diſcourſe belongs to the other half of the Congregation. And by an eaſie Argument, this whole Sermon concerning Miniſters, is applied to our Flocks, and made a motive to their Duty; for whereever an Embaſſy is ſent to any People, it is ſent for the Nation's Intereſt, not the Ambaſſadour's: and whereever a Meſſage of importance is to be delivered to a perſon, whatſoever obligations may lie upon the Meſſenger, there lies more upon the Party to whom it is ſent. The Meditation therefore from this Diſcourſe which is proper for our People, is not, How guilty is my Miniſter, if he be negligent when my Soul is in hazard: But how guilty ſhall I be, if I be negligent my ſelf? If this matter be of ſuch moment, that the very Inſtrument, the Meſſenger, the Ambaſſadour, that is but employed to perſuade me, will have my blood required of him, if he neglects his Charge; how inexcuſable ſhall I be, if I my ſelf ſhould be the negligent perſon? how wicked, if I refuſe the offer? My Miniſter's fault is but as if the Council in ſome Trial ſhould be careleſs of his part: but my fault is as if the Party himſelf ſhould be wanting to his own Cauſe. His fault is, as if the Advocate ſhould ſhew leſs concern; but mine is, as if the Priſoner himſelf ſhould be careleſs in the defence of his own life.

And

And this is not a wreſting the Argument, but a natural inference, and muſt be preſſed farther yet: For ſince it is for the ſake of the Flocks that there are appointed Shepherds; ſince all our Work and Miniſtry is for your Inſtruction, Benefit, and Good: And ſince God has given all men Conſcience, and Knowledge, to promote their own intereſts; there are great obligations, not only to be reconciled to God by our Preaching, but to encourage, ſupport, and ſtrengthen our hands, in our labours, for your ſalvation.

They are known things what affronts a Miniſter in courſe meets with in an evil Generation; What wrongs and loſſes from Worldly and Covetous? And what jeers and abuſes from the Atheiſts and Profane? But theſe we reckon our lot, we count of them when we Undertake the Office; and we ſupport our ſelves, as with the belief that God will reward us if we bear them for his ſake; ſo alſo, that we ſhall certainly have the encouragement and favour of good men, and the kindneſs of our Flocks: But when thoſe that ſhould ſtand by us, are themſelves the deſpiſers; when they that ſhould cover our failings, take a pleaſure to divulge them; when thoſe that have a name for Wiſdom, or any other Virtue, make uſe of their Reputation for the leſſening of Ours: When our Flocks themſelves, amongſt

amongſt whom we Labour, are the diſcouragers of our Pains; their unkindneſs pierces deeper than the Atheiſts jeſts. It is true, that even in ſuch caſes, without leſſening our diligence, we ſhou'd ſtrive againſt their unkindneſs; but if men prove to be but men, and be tempted to any neglects, the fault and blame, is not only the Miniſter's; (I would uſe no harder expreſſion) but the guilt of ſuch neglects does not all lye at the Miniſter's door.

I might farther exhort to a due reſpect to Miniſters, not only as a thing that promotes and upholds the means of your own Salvation, and Religion in the World; but as an act, and inſtance, of Religion and Love to God. There is Piety in covering our failings, in being cautious of receiving accuſations, in reproving of ſcoffers at Religion, and our Office: And for men either to be of thoſe ſcorners themſelves, or encouragers of thoſe that are, does not only reproach us, but God, who gave us this Employ and Buſineſs.

When *Hanun* clipt *David*'s Ambaſſadours Beards, and their Garments to the middle, though the thing was to the Ambaſſadours, yet the affront was to *David*: And a little Logick would make men ſee, if they were willing, that when they make themſelves mer-

ry

ry with our Office, the affront and injury does not terminate, does not end at us.

It is true, there are distinctions and differences to be made; and as in every duty Prudence hath a great scope, it has as large in this; and the more truly a man favours our Order because he loves God, the more sensible he is, and offended at those Ministers that reproach their own Office by evil Actions; but for those that in their general course, are despisers of the Clergy, we must believe there is some secret Atheism at bottom, and hatred of God; for the World could never yet understand the consistency of loving God, and hating his Priests.

But upon this point I will not enlarge farther. It is our ungrateful subjects, and as I have been brief on every head, I had rather have been shorter still on this.

To conclude therefore this whole discourse. Let us settle it in our hearts, not only as a probable Doctrine, but as a firm Principle of Life and Action; That by Sin and Wickedness, there has been such distance, such forbidden intercourse betwixt God and Man, that God sent forth his Son to bring the World back to their Duty, to Righteousness, to Justice, to the proper place of Creatures, that without encouraging of sin, he might be to them a

bountiful, a good, and a kind Creator. That the Office of Miniſters, our Preaching, and Sermons, the whole buſineſs of Religion is in ſuch a manner to reconcile men to God; that when we are Preaching about Moral Virtues, as Temperance, Juſtice, Chaſtity, Truth, Obedience to Parents, diligence in our Callings; tho ſuch Sermons may ſeem fartheſt off, yet they are in truth neareſt to this reconciliation, becauſe they are a making men ſuch as God deſires they ſhould be: And whatſoever other motives, in the ſeveral Diſcourſes, may be made uſe of from the preſent advantage or miſchief of any practice; yet the main motive of all is this, That while men are vicious, and unreaſonable, God is againſt them; and they can never be happy, unleſs it be in the Favour, by the Bleſſing, in reconciliation to the great Ruler of the world, that diſpoſes of all things, and from whom all good proceeds: And howſoever an Atheiſtical Age may deride theſe Doctrines of reconciling men to God, let us believe it as a ſolid point; and if there be any ſuch ſcorners preſent, even for them that Pray not for themſelves, let us Pray, and for our ſelves no leſs, let us beſeech God, That none of us may depart Vicious, Wicked, Unjuſt, Impenitent, out of this world, to experience in the other, and feel what that enmity is of a Juſt and Righteous God, to wicked Souls, and unreaſonable Actions.

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